

“Ila/इला” in Rigved: An Honourable Person or A Mythical Character?

By VR Patil (email: vrpmet@yahoo.com)

Introduction: There are many very famous/ special characters in **Rigved** who receive maximum attention from the rigvedic scholars/experts, and hence often get highlighted in the literature pertaining to it. Therefore, they always remain in the limelight, frequently get scrutinized by the enthusiasts, and the new readers as well. Some rigvedic characters that are given less importance in the text, usually remain behind screen most of the times, and hence many scholars normally treat their textual presence as '**not much important**'. In fact, they still do have to say something, would reveal or share the facts about, “how the rigvedic text got evolved from the Earliest to the Last Mandala” only when they are taken seriously, studied thoroughly but also need to be seen in proper perspective. In the present essay, an attempt has been made to get to know more about one such rigvedic character, “**Ila**” about whom some experts have divergent views. Here, “**Ila/इला**” the character, is being treated as “ a Key Feature and not just as a Guest Appearance” present on the landscape of **Rigved since its inception**, and tried to explain in such a way that **as if** it is going to disclose its real story hidden inside.

“Ila/इला” as appears in Rigved: The term, **Ila** is found in the all mandalas of **Rigved** and its Mandala-wise presence is given below,

Ila: 1(10), 2(4), 3(18), 4(2), 5(6), 6(4), 7(8), 8(2), 9(4), 10(11)-----[1] and [2]

The compiled information on **Ila** includes all those terms that contain its Sanskrit variants such as Ilah, Ilayat, Ila, Ilanam, Ilabhi, Ilam, Ilaya, Ilavatim, Ilavanta, Ile, Ilate, Ilasu etc. It is quite possible that some of these words would have been used in different context, and therefore, need to be examined from different angles. For example, as per the Sanskrit experts, the term, **Ila** means, proper name of female or the word or Speech/Vac/ Goddess of revelation. Hence, it would definitely lead to the confusion of the reader. The underlined Mandalas are the Family Books of **Rigved** and five out of these six mandalas belong to the category of the Early Mandalas, and they are-2, 3, 4, 6, and 7. In the present essay, the order of composition of the Rigvedic Mandalas is considered as- 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 5, 8, 9, 1 and 10.

The following paragraphs would explain that how the different composers of **Rigved** have used of the term “**Ila/इला**” to highlight its association with other rigvedic features.

I. *Ila/इळा* in association with Agni/Fire :

In **Mandala-3, Visvamitra**, the lead composer of this mandala, in the last verse of the very first hymn has tried to connect God Agni/fire with the term, *Ila/इळा* as **ilāmaghne**.

Rv-3.1,23 : *इळामग्रे पुरुदंसं सनिं गोः शश्वत्तमं हवमानायसाध | सयान नः सूनुस्तनयो विजावाग्रे सा ते सुमतिर्भुत्वस्मे ||*

*ilāmaghne purudaṁsam sanim ghoḥ śasvattamaṁ havamānāyasādha |
syān naḥ sūnustanayo vijāvāghne sā te sumatirbhutvasme ||*

Griffith translation (denoted by symbol- #) of the said verse is as under,

Rv-3.1,23: As holy food, Agni, to thine'invoker give wealth in cattle, lasting, rich in marvels.
To us he born a son, and spreading offspring. Agni, be this thy gracious will to us-ward.

From the above, it is clear that Griffith did not give due importance to the term, *Ila/इळा*, and hence we do not find its intended meaning in his translation. Please note that **Visvamitra** has repeatedly used the same verse in other hymns too, but retained its position as the last verse in each of these hymns, irrespective of total number of verses present in them. Numbers of all the verses where the special compound word, **ilāmaghne** appear are given below.

The numbers of verses that commence with **ilāmaghne** word are : **Rv-3.1,23;** 3.5,11; 3.6,11; 3.7,11; 3.15,7; Rv-3.22,5; Rv-3.23,5; but a verse Rv-3.24,2 begins with **Agni Ila**.

By combining *Ila* with **Agni**, the composer probably wanted to convey that Agni has been kindled **first** in *Ila's* presence or place.

Additionally, in Mandala-5 verse, **Rv-5.4,4** we find *Ila* and **Agni** together.

Rv-5.4,4: *juṣasvāghna ilāyā sajoṣā yatamāno raśmibhiḥ sūryasya |*

juṣasva naḥ samidham jātaveda ā ca devān haviradyāya vakṣi ||

Agni, enjoy, of one accord with *Ila*, striving in rivalry with beams of Surya,
Enjoy, O Jatavedas, this our fuel, and bring the Gods to us to taste oblations.

Probable reason for the combination of *Ila* and **Agni/fire** would be explained subsequently.

II. Ilaspade/Ilayaspada/इळसपदे: In some rigvedic mandalas, this term whose literal meaning is **Ila's foot** or **a place of Ila's resting** is specifically seen and that has been explained below. Griffith translation of the same verse is denoted by a symbol- #.

Iaspade is found in five out of ten rigvedic Mandalas and mandala-wise its occurrences are;

Iaspade/ इळसपदे: 2(1), 3(2), 6(1), 1(2) ,10(5)

- **Iaspade/ इळसपदे** in Mandala-2:

Rv-2,10,1: *ohūtro aghniḥ prathamah piteve***īaspade manuṣā** yat samiddhaḥ |
śriyaṃ vasāno amṛto vicetā marmṛjenyaḥ śravasyaḥsa vājī ||

Agni, first, loudly calling, like a Father, kindled by man upon the **seat of worship**.

Clothed in his glory, deathless, keen of insight, must be adorned by all, the Strong, the Famous.

- **Iaspade/ इळसपदे** in Mandala-3:

Rv-3.23,4; *ni tvā dadhe vara ā pṛthivyā* **īlāyāspade** sudinatte ahnām |
dr̥ṣadvatyām mānuṣa āpayāyām sarasvatyām revadaghnedidīhi ||

नि तवा दधे वर आ पृथिव्या इळायस पदे सुदिनत्वे अह्नाम | **दर्षद्वत्यां मानुष आपयायां सरस्वत्यां** रेवदग्रेदिदीहि ||

He set thee in the earth's most lovely station, in **Ila's place**, in days of fair bright weather.

On man, on **Apaya**, Agni! on the rivers **Drsadvati**, **Sarasvati**, shine richly.

Rv-3,29.4: *īlāyāstvāpade* vayaṃ nābhā pṛthivyā adhi |
*jātavedo ni dhīmahyaghne havyāya vo***lhave** ||

In **Ila's place** we set thee down, upon the central point of earth,

That, Agni Jatavedas, thou mayst bear our offerings to the Gods.

- **Iaspade/इळसपदे** in Mandala-6:

Rv-6.1,2: *adhā hotā nyasīdo yajīyāni***īaspada** iṣayannīḍyaḥ san |
taṃ tvā naraḥ prathamam devayanto maho rāye citayanto anu ghman ||

As Priest thou satest at the **seat of worship**, furthering us, best Offerer, meet for honour.

So first to thee have pious men resorted, turning thy mind to thoughts of ample riches.

- **Iaspade/ इळसपदे** in Mandala-1:

Rv-1.128,1: *ayaṃ jāyata* **manuṣo** dharīmaṇi hotā yajisṭha uśijāmanuvratamaghnīḥ svamanu
vratam | *viśvasruṣṭiḥ sakhīyate rayiriva śravasyate* | *adabdho hotā ni ṣadadi***īaspade**
parivīta **īlas- pade** ||

By Manu's law was born this Agni, Priest most skilled, born for the holy work of those who yearn therefore, yea, born for his own holy work.

All ear to him who seeks his love and wealth to him who strives for fame,

Priest ne'er deceived, he sits in **Ila's holy place**, girt round in **Ila's holy place**.

- **Ilaspade/इळसपदे in Mandala-10:**

Rv-10.1,6: *sa tu vastrāṇyadha peśanāni vasāno aghnirnābhāpṛthivyāḥ |
aruṣo jātaḥ pada iḷāyāḥ purohito rājanyakṣīha devān ||*

So Agni stands on earth's most central station, invested in well-decorated garments.

Born, red of hue, where men pour out libations, O King, as great High Priest bring the Gods hither.

Rv-10.70,1: *imām me aghne samidham juṣasveḷas pade prati haryāghṛtācīm |
varṣman pṛthivyāḥ sudinatve ahnāmūrdhvobhava sukrato devayajyā ||*

Enjoy, O Agni, this my Fuel, welcome the oil-filled ladle where we pour libation.

Rise up for worship of the Gods, wise Agni, on the earth's height, while days are bright with beauty.

Rv-10.91,1: *saṁ jāghṛvadbhirjaramāṇa idhyate dame damūnā iṣayanniḷas pade |
viśvasya hotā haviṣo vareṇyo vibhurvibhāvāsuṣakhā sakhīyate ||*

Brisk, **at the place of Ila**, hymned by men who wake, our own familiar Friend is kindled in the house;

Hotar of all oblation, worthy of our choice, Lord, beaming, trusty friend to one who loveth him.

Rv-10.91,4: *prajānannaghne tava yoniṁ ṛtviyamiḷāyās pade ghṛtavantamāsadaḥ |
ā te cikitra uṣasāmivetaḥ arepasaḥ sūryasyevaraśmayāḥ ||*

Foreknowing well, O Agni, thou **in Ila's place** hast occupied thy regular station balmed with oil.

Marked are thy comings like the comings of the Dawns, the rays of him who shineth spotless as the Sun.

Among all five aforementioned mandalas in which the term, **Ilaspade/इळसपदे** occurs, show one common feature, that is, presence of **active reference of Yajnas** being conducted on the bank of river **Saraswati**. The term, **Active reference** practically means, presence of at least one independent verse, addressed to river **Saraswati**, wherein the composer invokes **her** by way of performing Yajna ceremony. The verses of Mandala-1, **Rv-1.3,11-12** and Mandala-10 verses, **Rv-10.17,7 to 9; Rv-10.30,12** manifest the same. The speciality of the verses of two Late Mandalas

(Mandala-1 and 10) is that both reflect presence of **Iaspade** term/ phrase twice in the same verse. Hence it can be safely concluded the **Iaspade/इळसपदे** is the place or location around river **Saraswati**, where rigvedic character **Ila/इळ** would have lived in the past. Mandala-3 verse, **Rv-3.23,4** provides direct clue about the same as it includes names of three rigvedic rivers that used to flow in the eastern region of Indus-Saraswati Valley Civilization (I-SVC), namely **Drsdvavati**, **Apaya** and **Saraswati** and a special term, **Manusha** in the single verse. Hence, **Iaspada** actually represents the location/territory in and around **Saraswati** and that area could be the part of modern-day **Haryana state of India**.

Griffith[1], while translating the verses pertaining to **Iaspade/इळसपदे**, at some places, has somehow misinterpreted the term or just overlooked or failed to perceive its proper meaning, and hence in his translation at some places, we find use of the phrases other than **Ila's Place** such as; **Seat of worship** (**Rv-2,10,1** and **Rv-6.1,2**), **libation's place** (**Rv-10.1,6**; **Rv-10.70,1** and **Rv-10.191,1**). Selected **Hits and Misses of Griffith Translation** have been placed at Appendix "A".

Now, please have a close look at the verse from **Mandala-5** probably indicating presence of the terms, **Sudas**, river **Apaya** along with **Iabhir** (**इळाभिर/īlābhir**) as given below,

Rv-5.53,2: *aitān ratheṣu tasthuṣaḥ kaḥ śuśrāva kathā yayuḥ |
kasmai sasruḥ sudāse anv āpaya īlābhir vṛṣṭayaḥ saha ||*

ऐतान रथेषु तस्थुषः कः शुश्राव कथा ययुः | कस्मै सस्रुः सुदासे अन्व आपय इळाभिर वर्ष्टयः सह ||

Who, when they stood upon their cars, hath heard them tell the way they went?

Who was the bounteous man to whom their kindred rains flowed down with food of sacrifice?

Please bear in mind that **Mandala-5** is generally considered as a mandala that overlaps between the two main classes of rigvedic Mandalas i.e. the Early and the Late Mandalas, means a part of which would have been composed prior to the completion of **Mandala-7** (because of presence of two rivers, **Parusni** and **Yamuna** in both mandalas, and active reference of **Bharata** as well), and a part after it after the composers got relocated to west of river **Sindhu**. Additionally, presence of a verse exclusively dedicated to river **Saraswati** (**Rv-5.43,11**) is an indication of the **active reference of Yajna** being performed on its bank.

Here again, we see that **Griffith** has missed out the target, and presented the verse in a different way. The **Rv-5.53,2** verse actually reports a very old incidence, when a car /chariot of king **Sudas** (Tribe leader of **Mandala-7**) gets stuck- up once in **Ila's** place, due to occurrence of heavy rain, causing overflowing of river **Apaya** above danger level, that resulted into severe flooding of

that region. Please note that Mandala-7 mainly covers the activities of king **Sudas** in the locations adjacent to the rivers like **Parusni**, **Yamuna** and **Saraswati** but without crossing river **Sindhu**.

The supporters of **Aryans Migration Theory** (AMT) regularly profess that the Aryans entered the Indus Valley from the west direction. While as the existence of **Iaspade** term in the three Early Mandalas (Mandala-2, 3 and 6) where there is no reference of the major river of west, i.e. river **Sindhu** in any of the hymns contradicts their claim, and hence the location of **Iaspade** has to be in the east of I-SVC. In other words, presence of the phrase **Iaspade/इळसपदे** in the mandalas wherein we find mention of river **Saraswati** in active mode, and also the names of other rivers like **Apaya**, **Dradvati** do exhibit ancient rigvedic region is nothing but present-day **Haryana** state of India.

III. Ila in Apri Suktas/ Apris Hymns: The term, **Ila** is invariably found in all ten Apris Hymns of **Rigved** is shown in **Table-1**.

Table-1

Verse Number	Names of the Rigvedic Characters in the order as they appear in a verse
Rv-2.3,8	Saraswati, Ila , Bharati
Rv-3.4,8	Bharati, Ila , Saraswati
Rv-7.2,8	Bharati, Ila , Saraswati
Rv-5.5,8	Ila , Saraswati, Mahi
Rv-9.5,8	Bharati, Saraswati, Ila , Mahi
Rv-1.13,9	Ila , Saraswati, Mahi
Rv-1.142,9	Bharati, Ila , Saraswati, Mahi
Rv-1.188,8	Bharati, Ila , Saraswati
Rv-10.70,8	Ila with Three Goddesses, but not named
Rv-10.110,8	Bharati, Ila , Saraswati

The most interesting thing is, the composers of these Ten **Apri Suktas** have treated **Ila**, **Saraswati** and **Bharati** together as the Three Goddesses/ tisro devī/तिस्रो देवीः. Out of these three Goddesses, at many places, river **Saraswati** has been lauded as the Goddess outside the Apris Hymns. But question does arise, What made the composers to bring these three feminine features together and then glorify them as the Goddesses in the specific verses of the Apris Hymns?

Answer to afore stated question probably lies in the very first verse of **Mandala-2. Rv-**

2.1,11:

*tvamaghne **aditir**deva dāśuṣe tvam̐ hotrā **bhāratī** vardhaseghirā |
tvam̐**īlā** śatahimāsi dakṣase tvam̐ vṛtrahā vasupate **sarasvatī** ||*

Griffith Translation of above mentioned verse is as under,

Thou, God, art **Aditi** to him who offers gifts: thou, Hotri, **Bharati**, art strengthened by the song.

Thou art the hundred-wintered **Ila** to give strength, Lord of Wealth! Vrtra-slayer and **Sarasvati**.

Careful examination of the said verse reveals presence of four female characters namely, **Aditi**, **Bharati**, **Ila** and **Sarasvati** in it. Out of these four **Ila**, **Bharati** and **Sarasvati** figure in most of the **Apri Suktas**. Hence it can be presumed that, verse **Rv-2.1,11** would have acted as the base for inclusion of names of these Three Goddesses in **Apris Hymns**. As such, the verse **Rv-2.1** can be construed as the starting point of **Rigved** as it provides appropriate framework or background essential for initiation of Yajna function.

But there lies a real **catch** or clear **hint** in the verse, **Rv-2.1,11**. When we see the verse minutely, we find that the term **Ila** has been described with a very special rigvedic phrase and that is “**hundred-wintered Ila** or **īlā śatahimāsi**”.

Now a fresh question surfaces, Why did the composer attach “**hundred-wintered/ शतं हिमा**” phrase to character **Ila**?

Scrutiny of the complete rigvedic text shows that various rigvedic composers have used different phrases like Hundred Autumn, Hundred Winters, Hundred Weathers, Hundred Springs etc in their compositions to highlight the **ideal lifespan of the Human-beings**. Other than human beings, these terms have not been used for the characters that are designated as the Deities whether Imaginary or Natural Forces/Powers or even for river **Sarasvati**. This means to say that, factually, character **Ila** in **Rigved** has to be a mortal one.

Mandala-wise use of different phrases in rigvedic literature for the indication of targeted lifespan of the people, Hundred Years is as under;

Hundred winters/ **śatam̐ himā**/ शतं हिमा : 1(2) , 2(1), 5(1), 6(7), 9(1), 10(1)

Hundred Autumns/ **śatam̐ śarado**/शतं शरदो :(1(1), 2(1), 3(1), 7(2), 10(3)

Hundred Weathers/Lives/Springs/Years: (1(3), 6(1), 10(2)

In India, whenever there is a celebration of Birth Anniversary of anyone, we find several hoardings/flex boards/banners placed at many locations in cities and towns, wishing that person a very long life by way of mentioning “**Jivet Sharadah shatam/जीवेत शरदः शतम ...**” on them. Similar phrases are also seen in the two verses of the rigvedic text, those are given below.

Rv-3.36,10: अस्मे पर यन्धि मघवन्ऋजीषिन्निन्द्र रायो विश्ववारस्य भूरेः ।

अस्मे शतं शरदो जीवसे धा अस्मे वीरान छश्वत इन्द्र शिप्रिन ॥

asme pra yandhi maghavannṛjīṣinnindra rāyo viśvavārasya bhūreḥ ।

asme **śataṁ śarado jīvase** dhā asme vīrān chaśvata indra śiprin ॥

Rv-7.66,16: तच्चक्षुर्देवहितं शुक्रमुच्चरत । पश्येम शरदः शतं जीवेम शरदः शतम ॥

taccakṣurdevahitaṁ śukramuccarat । paśyema śaradaḥ śataṁ **jīvema śaradaḥ śataṁ** ॥

Visvamitra (Mandala-3 composer), and **Vasistha** (Mandala-7 composer) have used these phrases in their own styles in an anticipation of hundred years of lifetime/Life Expectancy.

Before we address the main issue of the rigvedic feature “**Ila**”, I wish to take out two leaves from the **History of Marathas** that portray two different **Women of Maratha Kingdom** who played a very crucial role in creation and propagation of the Maratha Regime from 1650 to 1800 AD, and hence left the permanent mark in the History of India. Marathas ruled the major portions of the present-day Maharashtra State, Gujarat, and a part of Central India for more than 100 years.

1. **Jijabai, Mother of Chatrapati Shivaji Raje Bhosale : Shahaji Raje Bhosale**, a military commander, and father of **Shivaji** was earlier in the court of **Nizam** of **Ahemadnagar**. Subsequently, he shifted to the Court of **Adilashah** of **Bijapur**. As **Shahaji** was always on the move, **Shivaji** had to spend his entire childhood with his mother, **Jijabai** who preferred to live on the various forts located around present-day Pune city. It is she, who moulded Shivaji and also engaged various trainers to train Shivaji in weaponry and other aspects of warfare. Her lasting influence and vision for Independent kingdom inspired **Shivaji** to form separate Maratha kingdom in the region that was surrounded by several Muslim Rulers. In true sense, **Jijabai** played dual role, she acted as a Mother and Father of **Shivaji**. She is also called as “**Virmata Jijau**”.

2. **Ahilyabai Holkar:** She was the **Queen of Malwa** region of Maratha Kingdom, who ruled the Holkar State for nearly 28 years starting from 1767 to 1795. A widow of Khanderao Holkar, unfortunately, lost her both children, went on to become Queen of Malwa state after the death of her Father-in Law, Malharao Holkar who had earlier trained her in the administration and military warfare fields. As the Queen of the Holkar state, she carried out development work in a big way in complete Malwa region that also includes **Indore city**. She took care of her subject in such a way that the people loved her to the extent, many at that time itself started calling her as **Devi Ahilya**. Due to her distinct style of leadership, and an extraordinary ability to resolve the various issues pertaining to her subject, and also the activities carried out outside her kingdom including renovations of several temples at many places in India, creation of the facilities for the Pilgrims such as construction of several **Ghats** and **Dharmshalas** at different Pilgrimage centers of different regions, has made her legendary figure, who is fondly remembered as **Ahilyadevi Holkar**. As a tribute to this great ruler, **Indore** domestic airport has been named “**Devi Ahilya Holkar Airport**”.

Above examples have been given just to impress upon the readers that, whenever a woman takes her responsibilities seriously, and decides to act with determination, then despite facing challenges or odd conditions, she can bring desired changes in the society, commanding respect and loyalty from the people as well. Keeping afore stated examples in the back of our minds, now we need to focus our attention on the other references available in various mandalas of **Rigved** about the character “**Ila**”.

A verse from the last Mandala, a part of Hymn **Rv-10.95** makes it clear that **Ila** is Mother of **Pururavas**. The Poet has composed the hymn as an on-going dialogue between **Urvashi** and **Pururavas**, poetically described their fictional love-story using sky-high imagination.

Rv-10.95,18: Thus speak these Gods to thee, **O son of Ila:** As death hath verily got thee for his subject,
Thy sons shall serve the Gods with their oblation, and thou, moreover, shalt rejoice in Svarga

Visvamitra, Mandala-3 composer in a verse, **Rv-3.29,3** talks about comparison between **creation of Agni** and the birth of “**Son of Ila**”, but without identifying him by name.

Rv-3.29,3: उत्तानायामव भरा चिकित्वान सद्यः परवीता वर्षणं जजान |

अरुषस्तूपो रुशदस्य पाज इळायास पुत्रो वयुने.अजनिष्ट ||

uttānāyāmava bhara cikitvān sadyaḥ pravīṭā vṛṣaṇam jajāna |

aruṣastūpo ruśadasya pāja ilāyās putro vayune.ajaniṣṭa ||

Lay this with care on that which lies extended: straight hath she borne the Steerwhen made prolific.
With his red pillar-radiant is his splendor -in our skilled task is born the **Son of Ila**.

The Hymn **Rv-3.29** is actually addressed to **Agni**, and a close look at the two early verses of the hymn reveals the hidden intention of the composer. Here, the Poet has explained an ancient method of creation of spark first by rubbing two wooden sticks over one another and then formation of blown up/full scale fire. Through these two verses, indirectly, the composer wants to highlight the fact that to get pregnant, a mature female needs to come in physical contact with her male counterpart first. Conversion of a tiny spark into stable fire/Agni, or the development of the fertilized egg to foetus first and then leading to birth of a baby/child is based on the scientific principle, of **Nucleation** and **Growth theory**. In one way, here **Visvamitra** tried to compare /correlate the **creation of Agni/fire** on the ground with the **birth of Ila's Son** or **vice versa**.

Probably, above explanation may provide answer to use of special term, **Ilamaghne/इळामग्ने** by **Visvamitra** in the beginning of the verses : **Rv-3.1,23**; 3.5,11; 3.6,11; 3.7,11; 3,15,7; Rv-3.22,5; Rv-3.23,5 (see para “I” mentioned earlier). In the verse, **Rv-3.23,4** the composer indicates that, at present, he is in the place of **Ila (iḷāyāstvā pade)**, performing Yajna there, and as per his belief, that place is the center-point of the Earth (nābhā pṛthivyā). Additionally, in the Hymn **Rv-3.29**, we also find mention of the birth of **Tanunapat**, and **Narasamsa**, the special characters who are mostly seen in the **Apri-Suktas/ Apri Hymns**.

Apart from the last mandala hymn, **Rv-10.95**; the names of Mother and Son i.e. **Ila** and **Pururavas**, are also found in the hymn of second-last mandala, **Rv-1.31** but in **two separate verses** (**Hymn Rv-1.31 has been placed at Appendix “B”**). **Verse-4** of the said hymn clearly indicates the spread of Pure **Agni** worship during the period of pious **Pururavas** first eastward and then in the west direction.

Rv-1.31,4: **Agni** thou madest heaven to thunder for mankind; thou, yet more pious, for **pious Pururavas**.

When thou art rapidly freed from thy parents, **first eastward** they bear thee round, and, **after, to the west**.

One possibility is that, during pre-rigvedic time, under the guidance of **Ila**, to propagate **Agni Worship cult** at other places, **Pururavas** and some Seers/ Rishis would have gone to the unknown regions located in the west direction but outside of I-SV region, and hence carried their language (ancient Sanskrit) to those places. **Pururavas** and the Rishis could have migrated for the said cause around 2300 BCE (during Mature Harappan Period) but did not come back to their original place of residence. This has been elaborated further in the later part of the present article titled as “**Special Comments on the First Rigvedic Royal Family that Matters the Most**” .

In the **11th** verse of Hymn **Rv-1.31**, we find presence of **Nahusa** and **Ila** together, indirectly indicating that **Ila** would have seen her Grandson, **Nahusa** as a **King** in action.

Rv-1.31,11: Thee, **Agni**, have the Gods made the first living One for living man, Lord of the house of **Nahusa**.

Ila they made the **teacher** of the **sons of men**, what time a Son was born to the father of my race.

In other words, **Ila** would have lived for a longer period, and in absence of Nahusa's father; **Pururavas**, she would have acted as the Guardian, and since childhood mentored **Nahusa** as the future **King** of that land. Therefore, the Mandala-2 composer in the verse **Rv-2.1,11**; has specifically described a long lived **Ila** as “**hundred-wintered Ila** or **ilā śatahimāsi**”

Now we shall see how two independent verses from two different Mandalas tell us two separate stories of **Ila**.

First, a verse from Mandala-7 highlight **Ila** as the Goddess,

Rv-7.44,2 : **ilām devīm** barhiṣi sādāyanto.āśvinā viprā suhavāhuvema ||
dadhikrāvāṇam bubudhāno aghnimupa bruva uśasam sūryam ghām |

When, rising, to the sacrifice we hasten, awaking Dadhikras with adorations.

Seating on sacred grass the **Goddess Ila**. let us invoke the sage swift-hearing Asvins.

Also have a look at the verse from Apri-Sukta of the Last Mandala,

Rv-10.110,8: *ā no yajñam bhāratī tūyametvīlā manuṣvadihacetayanī |*
tisro devīrbārhiredam syonam sarasvatīsvapasaḥ sadantu ||

Let Bharati come quickly to our worship, and **Ila showing like a human being**.

So let Sarasvati and both her fellows, deft Goddesses, on this fair grass be seated.

Goddess Ila of the verse **Rv-7.44,2** in the original and in Griffith Translation as well has been clearly identified as the **human being** in the verse of last Mandala; **Rv-10.110,8**.

In all probability, it is the pre-rigvedic character, **Ila** who would have provided necessary support, and encouragement to the Pre-rigvedic Seers (Pratham Angirasa and his followers) for initiation and spreading worship of **Agni**. Hence, by way of calling **Her** as the Goddess since earlier to rigvedic period, and her subsequent inclusion as the Goddess in the rigvedic text, the Seers/Poets have expressed their deep gratitude to her.

Possibly after **Ila's** death, during King **Nahusa's** time, due to frequent failure of Monsoon

and or because of some tectonic movements in the upstream region of river **Saraswati**, would have caused drying up of the river and development of Drought like situation in the Indus- Saraswati Region. Having experienced water scarcity for a longer period, the people would have started questioning the Sages/Rishis about the sanctity of praising and worshiping various Deities. Then the ancestors of rigvedic Priests, after carrying out several Brain-storming sessions among themselves would have first created character, **Vritra**, a demon (personification of Drought) to impress upon the people that it was **He**, who stole the the water meant for them. Then to counter the dragon, they created special character **Indra** as the **Supreme Deity**, the **Ultimate Warrior God**, and also designated **him** as the **King of all Kings** so as to provide mental relief to all of them. Probably, this development would have hurt the ego of **Nahusa**, as at that time he would have been the **Samrat/Emperor/the sole king** in the complete **Indus-Saraswati region**, who in turn told the Rishis /Sages to leave his kingdom immediately.

Dejected Sages/ Rishis would have then moved in the south direction but along the bank of their beloved river **Saraswati**, and finally, decided to settle in the area adjoining the downstream of Saraswati, near the present-day Cholistan desert of Pakistan and started **Living in Exile**.

After sometime, at the new place of residence, taking a clue from Mother Nature, seriously observing wild forest fires on several occasions, the ancestors of the rigvedic Priests would have formulated Yajna ceremony. Here **Bharati**, mother of young Bharata (probably wife of **Yayati**, who as per the verse **Rv-10.63,1** is the son of **Nahusa**, after knowing about death of his father, gone to his kingdom to acquire the throne but would have left **Bharati** and her son **Bharata** with the Sages), similar to **Ila** in the past, would have encouraged the Rishis to continue **Yajna** worship.

Revisiting the verse **Rv-2.1,11**; we observe that the composer has used the term **hotrā/ होत्रा** in association with **bhāratī/ भारती** and described her as होत्रा भारती वर्धसेगिरा / **hotrā bhāratī vardhaseghirā**. Additionally, two separated verses; **Rv-3.62,3** and **Rv-1.22,10** depict similar thing, and also connect the two independent terms; **hotrā** and **bhāratī**. Please note that these examples are not from the **Apris Hymns**, but are present in the verses of three different Mandalas.

Rv-3.62,3: asme tadindrāvaruṇā vasu ṣyādasme rayirmarutaḥ sarvavīraḥ |
asmān varūtrīḥ śaraṇairavantvasmān **hotrā bhāratī** dakṣiṇābhiḥ ||

Rv-1.22,10: ā ghnā aghna ihāvase **hotrām yaviṣṭha bhāratīm** | varūtrīm dhiṣaṇām vaha ||

This is to stress the fact that the character **Bharati** would have been closely associated with

the initial phase of development of **Yajna** ritual, but did not live longer like **Ila**. By way of lauding **Bharati** as the **Goddess** since beginning, the composers of **Rigved** pay their tributes to her.

In short, in the past, **Ila** would have been linked with establishment and promotion of **pure Agni worship**, and therefore, Mandala-3 composer has identified **her** with Agni/fire as **ilāmaghne/इळामग्ने**. Similarly, **Bharati** would have been closely associated with early formulation and propagation of **Yajna** rite, and hence the rigvedic composers connect her with **Yajna** by way of **Hotra Bharati**.

When the bits and pieces of the information available in various rigvedic mandalas about the character **Ila** compiled together, visualized in totality, and then assessed in proper context, we come to know that the rigvedic Character **Ila** is surely the respectable woman who lived during the pre-rigvedic era, was subsequently designated as the Goddess by the Rishis/Sages but well before the commencement of the Rigvedic Composition.

Summary:

In **Rigved**, right from the beginning of the text, we find the description about the “**Personification of the Imaginary Deities and the Demons**”, and the “**Deification of the Geographical Features like the Rivers, and the Plant extract, Soma**” too. At the same time, in **Rigved** there are cases of the “**Deification of the Persons**” as well and the mortal characters like **Ila** and **Bharati** represent the same.

Rigvedic character, **Ila** is definitely a **celebrated woman** who probably lived during the pre-rigvedic period in the region adjoining the rivers **Saraswati**, **Drsadvati**, and **Apaya** designated as **Ilaspade** by the composers of Mandala 2, 3, 6, 1, and 10 (present-day Haryana state) and played a key role in promotion of **pure Agni/Fire worship cult** in those day.

It seems that **Visvamitra**, the lead composer of **Mandala-3** has got very high regards for **Ila** and hence he intentionally clubbed her with **Agni** in the form of **ilāmaghne**.

References:

1. “**Rig Veda**”(Bilingual), Translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith (1896) in PDF format
2. **Rig Veda** (Griffith Translation)-Table of Content, Alphabetical frequency etc. from the

Intra text Digital Library available on www.Intratext.com

Special Comments on the First Rigvedic Royal Family that Matters the Most

Revisiting the First Royal Family of Rigved:

Apart from the names of Rishis/Poets belonging to several families who composed **Rigved** over a very long period appear frequently in the rigvedic literature, there are other Rigvedic Characters / names of the persons too such as **Ila, Pururavas, Nahusa, Yayati, Five Tribes, Bharatas** figure at many places, probably belong to one Noble family, very much part the text, and do play vital role in shaping the **Rigved**.

Ila: Name of an important Woman Character, seen in the all Mandalas of **Rigved**.

Pururavas: Son of **Ila**, present in the last two Mandalas, i.e. **Mandala-1 and 10**.

Nahusa: Probably, son of **Pururavas**, found in 6, 7, 5, 8, 9, 1 and 10 Mandalas (except 2, 3, and 4).

Yayati: Son of **Nahusa**, like **Pururavas** appears in the last two Mandalas, i.e. **Mandala-1 and 10**.

Five Tribes: Generic term exists in all mandalas of Rigved, but also covers related terms like, Peoples, Regions, Races etc. Anus, Druhyus, Purus, Turvasas and Yadus are the names of the **Five Tribes** who are linked with **Nahusa** but would have been the straight descendants of **Yayati**.

Bharati: A Woman character probably lived just before start of rigvedic composition.

Bharatas: Kings belonging to **Bharata** dynasty, mainly seen in action in all five Early Mandalas.

Generally, it is seen that with the name of Lead composer of each of the Five Early Mandalas, at least one king from **Bharata Dynasty** gets linked with. It is also noticed that in Mandala-2 and 3, out of the Five tribes of Nahusa, no member by proper name does appear in the text. Hence it is presumed that during the period of Mandala-2 and 3, the Priests and Bharatas lived far away from the residences of the Five Tribes.

Importance of the Hymn RV-1.31:

In reality, **Rigved** begins with the very first verse of Mandala-2. Ideally, it should commence with the past history of the characters; **Ila, Pururavas, Nahusa** and **Yayati** who are the real cause for the initiation and shaping of **Rigved**. Many scholars do not give much importance to the Hymn **Rv-1.31**. But in the complete rigvedic text, it is the only hymn in which, we find names of all four pre-rigvedic characters (representing four generations) who overshadow the rigvedic composition. Through the verse, **Rv-1.31,1**; the composer tells us the past story of creation and worshipping of the early Gods. He informs us that **Agni**, as the God was the creation of **the earliest Angirasa/Pratham Angirasa**, a Seer who lived a long ago, (would have been the founder/forefather of the rigvedic Angirasa family). It is **the earliest Angirasa** again who then using his **active wisdom**,

gave birth to **God Maruts**. **Second verse** of the **same hymn** conveys that **Agni** has sprung from **Two Mothers** probably indicating it occurs naturally by way of wild fire or lightning (the Early mandalas describe, **Agni** as a child born to Heaven and Earth/ typical rigvedic myth) or intentionally created by the human-beings. Since **Agni** has been designated as God, there is a need to worship **Him** regularly. It narrates the earliest story of elevation of the two natural forces, **Agni** and **Maruts** as the Gods, by the Earliest Angirasa (Pratham Angirasa). Please note that though Hymn **Rv-1.31** dedicated to **Agni**, is a part of second-last Mandala, but does not contain any magical action of any of the two Deities, and also has no reference to any enemy or problems created by the enemies that are found elsewhere. Additionally, there is no mention of Asva /Horse, or Ratha/Chariot or Soma or even river Saraswati. Although the hymn belongs to the Late Mandala that would have been composed during the **transition phase** of **Rigved**, still provides valuable information in the form of introduction of **pure Agni worship** prior to actual rigvedic period and its promotion to other places. Out of the four pre-rigvedic characters, only the character **Yayati**, who is also found in the verse **Rv-10.63,1** exhibits direct link with **Yajna** ceremony. This is to highlight the fact that up- gradation of **Pure Agni Worship** to **Proper Yajna ritual** with the invocation of several Deities would have occurred during **Yayati's** time only. Hence it also proves that, **Ila**, **Pururavas** and **Nahusa** who lived earlier to **Yayati**, had no connection with **Yajna** rite.

Rv-10.80,6; a verse from **Mandala-10** provides direct clue about the people who are originated from **Nahusa** adore **Agni**.

Rv-10.80,6; अग्निं विश ईळते मानुषीर्या अग्निं मनुषो नहुषो विजाताः |

aghniṃ viśa īlate mānuṣīryā aghniṃ manuṣo **nahuṣo** vijātāḥ |

Races of human birth pay Agni worship, **men who have sprung from Nahusa' line** adore him.

Additionally, Mandala-7 (**Rv-7.83,7**) informs us that the Ten Kings (in reality, the ten kings are inclusive of the five kings of Nahusa's tribes) do not worship **Indra- Varuna**, indirectly means perform no Yajna. At some places, they are termed as the **Anindra** or **Indra-less** or **Indra- denier**. When we take a re-look at the verse **Rv-1.31**, we find mention of only two Gods; **Agni** and **Maruts** in it, indirectly manifesting that other Rigvedic Deities would have been created subsequently. But **Indra** must have been created very late, but at the time of **Nahusa** when there was drought like situation prevailed around the area adjoining river Saraswati for a longer duration. The dispute between **Nahusa** and the ancestors of rigvedic Priests would have led to disowning of **Indra** by him. Hence **Nahusa** and his descendants, the Leaders of the **Five Tribes** did not believe in **Indra**.

When all these things are seen in totality, we come to know that **Pure Agni worship** was practiced from **Ila's** time to **Nahusa's** period and also continued by the Five Tribes of **Nahusa**.

Again coming back to verse **Rv-1.31,4**; we observe that it was **Pururavas** (son of **Ila**), who takes initiative to spread **Agni Worship cult** to other places. As per the Griffith translated verse, first he goes to East, probably, comes across the tribal people living in the Forest (region adjacent to river Ganga) who would not have shown any interest in the ritual, then he decides to move to west but outside the Saraswati- Indus Region. History tells us that the Indus Valley People had trade contacts with other civilization located in the west including Mesopotamia/Anatolia, and Pururavas would have gone to that region but probably did not come back to his native place. That is why, in the verse **Rv-1.31,11**; along with **Nahusa** we find mention of **Ila** in the same verse but no **Pururavas**. After the departure of Pururavas and senior Rishis/ Seers to west Asia, in their absence **Ila** would have become mentor of **Nahusa** and the caretaker of the families/children of the Rishis. Therefore, the composer of the said hymn has called her as the **Teacher of Men**. Please note that **Pururavas** then appears in the Hymn **Rv-10.95** with **Urvashi** which is nothing but a **Fantasy** or a **fairy Tale**. In a verse **Rv-5.41,19**; **Ila** is found with **Urvasi**, that is given below.

Rv-5.41,19: *abhi na ilā yūthasya mātā sman nadībhir urvaśī vā ghṛṇātu |*
urvaśī vā bṛhaddivā ghṛṇānābhyūrṇvānā prabhṛthasyāyoh ||

May **Ila**, Mother of the herds of cattle, and **Urvasi** with all the streams accept us;

May **Urvasi** in **lofty heaven** accepting, as she partakes the oblation of the living,

Please note that, in the said verse, the composer has described **Ila** as mother of the herd means ground based animals/cattle that are close to them (who practically feed them), but **Urvashi** has been explained as **living in Heaven** means an imaginary character that resides far away but a place where no one can reach or go as a living being.

A close look at the Hymn **Rv-1.31** would reveal altogether different thing. During the **Mature Harappan Period (around 2300 BCE)**, it was **Pururavas** and some selected Sages who would have gone outside the Indus-Saraswati Valley to promote **Agni Worship** there, but never came back. If the verse **Rv-1.31,4** is taken seriously, then the issue of presence of many similar words in the various Indo European Languages gets resolved immediately.

During the Late Rigvedic Period (after Mandala-8), **Anus** and some **Bhrgus** would have migrated to west, and formed an independent Avestan Culture in the present-day Afghanistan/ Iran area. Similarly, from South-west region of Indus- Saraswati Valley, with the traders from west, **Druhyus** would have gone to Iraq- Syria region who first established themselves as the Warriors in that region and then formed the **Mitanni** Kingdom there after sometime.

Selected Hits and Misses of the Character “Ila” in Griffith Translation

It appears that, while translating original Sanskrit text into English, **Griffith** in his translation, at some places, has not considered the term, **Ila** either by overlook or due to misinterpretation, and hence missed out it in some verses. Selected verse given below, bring out the same under two different headings,

1. **Hits** means in those verses, wherein we find inclusion of **Ila** term in his translation.
2. **Misses** means in those verse, he missed out term **Ila** or did not considered in translation.

Please note that the verses given below, do not include the verses that are already covered in the present text. Verses arranged in order of Mandalas as 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 5, 8, 9, 1, and 10.

1. Selected Five Hits of Griffith

Rv-2.31,4: *uta sya devo bhuvanasya sakṣaṇistvaṣṭā ghnābhiḥ sajoṣā jūjuvad ratham |*

ilā bhagho bṛhaddivota rodasī pūṣā purandhiraśvināvdhā patī ||

4 Or may this Tvastar, God who rules the world with power, one-minded with the Goddesses speed forth our car;

Ila and Bhaga the celestial, Earth and Heaven, Pusan, Purandhi, and the Asvins, ruling Lords.

Rv-3.7,5: *jānanti vṛṣṇo aruṣasya śevamuta bradhnasya śāsane raṇanti |*

divorucaḥ suruco rocamānā ilā yeṣāṃ ghaṇyā māhinā ghīḥ ||

5 They know the red Bull's blessing, and are joyful under the flaming-coloured Lord's dominion:

They who give shine from heaven with fair effulgence, whose lofty song like **Ila** must be honoured.

Rv-7.16,8: *yeṣāṃ ilā ghṛtahastā duroṇa ānapi prātā niṣīdati |*

tāmstrāyasva sahasya druho nido yachā naḥ śarma dīrghaśrut ||

They in whose home, her hand bearing the sacred oil, Ila sits down well-satisfied-

Guard them, Victorious God, from slander and from harm. give us a refuge famed afar.

Rv-9.62,3: *ilāsmabhyam saṃyatam || asāvyamśurmadāyāpsu dakṣo ghriṣṭhāḥ |*

Bringing prosperity to kine, they make perpetual **Ila** flow, To us for noble eulogy.

2. Selected Nine Misses of Griffith

Rv-4.2,5: *īlāvām eṣo asura prajāvān dīrgho rayiḥ pṛthubudhnaḥ sabhāvān ||*
yas ta idhmaṃ jabharat siṣvidāno mūrdhānaṃ vā tatapate tvāyā |

Agni, be this our sacrifice eternal, with brave friends, rich in kine and sheep and horses,
Rich, Asura! in sacred food and children, in full assembly, wealth broad-based and during.

Rv-4.3,9: *ṛtena ṛtaṃ niyatam īla ā ghor āmā sacā madhumat pakvam aghne |*
kṛṣṇā satī ruśatā dhāsinaiṣā jāmaryeṇa payasā pīpāya ||

I crave the cow's true gift arranged by Order: though raw, she hath the sweet ripe juice, O Agni.
Though she is black of hue with milk she teemeth, nutritious, brightly shining, all-sustaining.

Rv-4.50,8: *sa it kṣeti sudhita okasi sve tasmā īla pinvate viśvadānīm |*
tasmai viśaḥ svayam evā namante yasmin brahmā rājani pūrva eti ||

In his own house he dwells in peace and comfort: to him for ever holy food flows richly.
To him the people with free will pay homage-the King with whom the Brahman hath precedence.

Rv-6.58,4: *pūṣā subandhurdiva ā pṛthivyā īlas patirmaghavā dasmavarcāḥ |*
yaṃ devāso adaduḥ sūryāyai kāmēna kṛtaṃ tavaśaṃ svañcam ||

Near kinsman of the heaven and earth is Pusan, liberal, Lord of food, of wondrous iustre,
Whom strong and vigorous and swiftlymoving, subdued by love, the Deities gave to Surya.

Rv-5.28,1: *samiddho aghnir divi śocir aśret pratyāññ uṣasam urviyā vi bhāti |*
eti prācī viśvavārā namobhir devāṃ īlānā haviṣā ghṛtācī ||

Agni inflamed hath sent to heaven his lustre: he shines forth widely turning unto Morning.
Eastward the ladle goes that brings all blessing, praising the Godswith homage and oblation.

Rv-5.60,1: *īe aghniṁ svavasaṁ namobhir iha prasatto vi cayat kṛtaṁ naḥ |*
rathair iva pra bhare vājayadbhiḥ pradakṣiṇin marutāṁ stomam ṛdhyāṁ ||

I loud with reverence the gracious Agni: here may he sit and part our meed among us.
As with spoil-seeking cars I bring oblation: turned rightward I will swell the Marut's, praise-song

Rv-8.31,3: *asya prajāvatī ghṛhe. asaścantī dive-dive | ilā dhenumatī duhe ||*

Each day that passes, in his house flows his libation, rich in milk,
Exhaustless, bringing progeny.

Rv-9.108,13: *sa sunve yo vasūnāṁ yo rāyāmānetā ya ilānām | somoyaḥ sukṣitīnām ||*

Effused is he who brings good things, who brings us bounteous gifts and sweet refreshing food,

Rv-1.40,4: *yo vāghate dadāti sūnaraṁ vasu sa dhatte akṣiti śravaḥ |*

tasmā ilāṁ suvīrāmā yajāmahe supratūrtimanehasam ||

He who bestows a noble guerdon on the priest wins fame that never shall decay.
For him we offer sacred hero-giving food, peerless and conquering easily.

Hymn Rv-1.31Agni. (from Griffith Translation)

1 Thou, Agni, wast **the earliest Angiras**, a Seer; thou wast, a God thyself, the Gods' auspicious Friend.
After thy holy ordinance the Maruts, sage, active through wisdom, -with their glittering spears, were born.

2 O Agni, thou, the best and **earliest Angiras**, fulfillest as a Sage the holy law of Gods.
Sprung from two mothers, wise, through all existence spread, resting in many a place for sake of living man.

3 To Matarisvan first thou, Agni, wast disclosed, and to Vivasvan through thy noble inward power.
Heaven and Earth, Vasu! shook at the choosing of the Priest: the burthen thou didst bear, didst worship mighty Gods.

4 Agni thou madest heaven to thunder for mankind; thou, yet more pious, for pious **Pururavas**.
When thou art rapidly freed from thy parents, **first eastward** they bear thee round, and, **after, to the west**.

5 Thou, Agni, art a Bull who makes our store increase, to be invoked by him who lifts the ladle up.
Well knowing the oblation with the hallowing word, uniting all who live, thou lightenest first our folk

6 Agni, thou savest in the synod when pursued e'en him, farseeing One! who walks in evil ways.
Thou, when the heroes fight for spoil which men rush, round, slayest in war the many by the hands of few.

7 For glory, Agni, day by day, thou liftest up the mortal man to highest immortality,
Even thou who yearning for both races givest them great bliss, and to the prince grantest abundant food.

8 O Agni, highly lauded, make our singer famous that he may win us store of riches:
May we improve the rite with new performance. O Earth and Heaven, with all the Gods, protect us.

9 O blameless Agni lying in thy Parents' lap, a God among the Gods, be watchful for our good.
Former of bodies, be the singer's Providence: all good things hast thou sown for him, auspicious One!

10 Agni, thou art our Providence, our Father thou - we are thy brethren and thou art our spring of life.
in thee, rich in good heroes, guard of high decrees, meet hundred, thousand treasures, O infallible!

11 Thee, Agni, have the Gods made the first living One for living man, Lord of the house of **Nahusa**.
Ila they made the **teacher of the sons of men**, what time a Son was born to the father of my race.

12 Worthy to be revered, O Agni, God, preserve our wealthy patrons with thy succours, and ourselves.

Guard of our seed art thou, aiding our cows to bear, incessantly protecting in thy holy way.

13 Agni, thou art a guard close to the pious man; kindled art thou, four-eyed! for him who is unarmed.

With fond heart thou acceptest e'en the poor man's prayer, when he hath brought his gift to gain security.

14 Thou, Agni gainest for the loudly-praising priest the highest wealth, the object of a man's desire.

Thou art called Father, caring even for the weak, and wisest, to the simple one thou teachest lore.

15 Agni, the man who giveth guerdon to the priests, like well-sewn armour thou guardest on every side.

He who with grateful food shows kindness in his house, an offerer to the living, is the type of heaven.

16 Pardon, we pray, this sin of ours, O Agni, -- the path which we have trodden, widely straying,

Dear Friend and Father, caring for the pious, who speedest nigh and who inspirest mortals.

17 As erst to **Manus**, to **Yayati**, **Angiras**, so **Angiras! pure Agni!** come thou to our hall

Bring hither the celestial host and seat them here upon the sacred grass, and offer what they love.

18 By this our prayer be thou, O Agni, strengthened, prayer made by us after our power and knowledge.

Lead thou us, therefore, to increasing riches; endow us with thy strength-bestowing favour.